

yonder.

Eastern Hill Activation Master Plan

Engagement Outcomes Summary

Eastern Hill, Albury

Date: 16 May 2022

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Prepared for AlburyCity by

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Project: Eastern Hill Activation Master Plan

Commissioned by: AlburyCity Council

Prepared by: Yonder Landscape Architecture,
PO Box 1198, Albury NSW 2640 Australia
ABN 68 437 343 209

We acknowledge and respect Traditional Owners as the traditional custodians of our shared lands, waters and seas. We recognise their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection with Country. We honour Elders past, present and emerging, whose knowledge and wisdom will ensure the continuation of culture, and the values which uphold them.

We respectfully acknowledge the Wiradjuri people on whose traditional lands Eastern Hill is located, and the land on which this report was prepared.

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Introduction

Project summary

Yonder Landscape Architecture have been engaged by AlburyCity to work with council and the community to prepare an activation Master Plan for Eastern Hill.

Key driver of the master plan is for AlburyCity to continue to provide a range of recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors to Albury while taking a conservative approach to the impacts on the natural environment.

The development of this master plan will aim to meet the council endorsed Albury Mountain Bike Strategy, as well as consider other users, adjacent residential properties, the interface with the Hume and Hovell Walking track and links with Mungabareena Reserve. It also provides an aspirational and strategic plan and framework which helps to guide the future activation and development of Eastern Hill.

Brief

The Brief called for the following to be addressed:

- ▶ Feedback received during the “Have a Say” process
- ▶ Implementation of the trail network as shown in the Albury Mountain Bike Strategy
- ▶ Proposed trail heads to be established at Eastern Hill Lookout and in Mungabareena Reserve.
- ▶ Descent focused network with one or two climbs
- ▶ Suits a range of classifications to enable rider progression.
- ▶ Activation of key lookout points
- ▶ Hume and Hovell Track alignment refined and incorporated into the network design to minimise user conflict.
- ▶ Minimise impact to existing vegetation where possible
- ▶ Identify a revegetation program incorporated into the trail development to improve both ecological value and visitor experience.
- ▶ Considers all users of the reserve including walkers, trail runners, and riders.
- ▶ Identify a signage strategy for way-finding around the Eastern Hill precinct.

Project process

The master planning process is comprised of three key stages. The first stage, Investigation and Engagement is complete, and the findings are summarised in this report.



The Site

Context

Eastern Hill Reserve is 77 hectares and located to the east of central Albury adjacent to the localities of East Albury, Mungabareena Reserve, Doctors Point and Easternview Estate.

It is widely accessed by residents for recreational purposes. The lookout is a great vantage point to take in the views of Albury and its surrounding landscapes.

Study area

The area of study for Eastern Hill Activation Master Plan consists of several parcels of land situated on both sides of East Street in Albury, with a mix of remnant vegetation former agricultural land and public/private infrastructure.

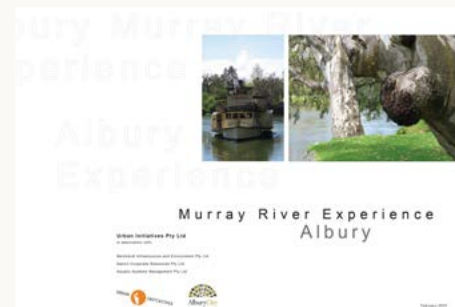


Main image: Area of study plan.

Background

A review of the following documents will inform the preparation of the Master Plan:

- ▶ Public Toilet Strategy 2020 to 2030. Prepared August 2020 for AlburyCity by City Landscapes.
- ▶ Mungabareena Aboriginal Place Management Plan. Prepared on 12 September 2019 for AlburyCity by Biosis Pty Ltd.
- ▶ AlburyCity Murray River Experience Master Plan Report 2006. Prepared February 2007 for AlburyCity by Urban Initiatives Pty Ltd.
- ▶ AlburyCity Signage Guidelines 2019.
- ▶ Albury Mountain Bike Strategy. Prepared September 2021 for AlburyCity Council by Common Ground Trails Pty Ltd.
- ▶ Regional Natural Environment Strategy. Prepared July 2020 for AlburyCity and Wodonga Council by Biosis Pty Ltd.
- ▶ Online survey submissions and letters from communities.



Engagement process

The community engagement phase

The community engagement phase identified key strengths, issues and opportunities for Eastern Hill Activation Master Plan.

The aim of the engagement was to seek community and stakeholders input and feedback on activating the reserve.

AlburyCity engaged with community groups and individuals within the study area, and also to the broader users to understand the strengths, issues and opportunities related to Eastern Hill.

Over 554 Albury residents and visitors contributed to the development of this phase. The engagement process was designed to identify any issues and opportunities for Eastern Hill.

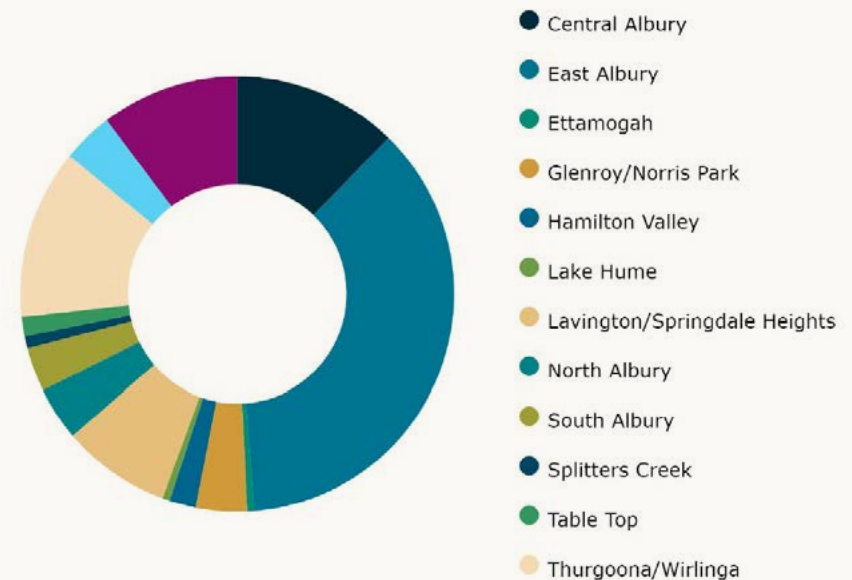
Method	Date	Summary	Participation
Online survey	25 January 2022 - 16 February 2022	An Online Survey was available on the AlburyCity website.	554 community survey responses
Individual workshops with stakeholders	March 2022	Face to face workshops with two stakeholder groups and representatives from AlburyCity Council.	Two face to face workshops, + one video call

On-line survey findings

Participation

The on-line survey was open between 25 January to 16 February 2022. It was available on the AlburyCity website for the community to voice their opinion and share how they would like Eastern Hill to be activated. The on-line survey received 554 responses.

- ▶ About 23% of respondents were aged 29 years or under; 43% were aged between 30 to 45, and 34% were aged 46 or over.
- ▶ 36% of respondents were from East Albury, 12% were from Central Albury, 12% were from Thurgoona/Wirringa, and the rest of the 38% were from places including Glenroy, Lavington, North, South and West Albury, Table Top, Hamilton Valley and Splitters Creek.



Graph: Online survey respondents' suburb of residence

Eastern Hill Activation Master Plan Engagement Outcomes Summary

How do people currently use Eastern Hill?

- ▶ Two of the most popular uses of Eastern Hill by the respondents are walking and bike riding.
- ▶ The survey shows that trail running, picnic, as well as nature and wildlife observation are also popular activities amongst respondents.
- ▶ A noticeable 50% of the respondents uses Eastern Hill at least once a week, while 36.7% of the respondents use it monthly, and a 12% of the respondents uses it daily.

“My walk out there each day is an essential escape from the stress of the urban built environment.”

What do people like the most about Eastern Hill?

- ▶ Majority of the respondents find the views at Eastern Hill to be one of the best things about Eastern Hill.
- ▶ The Hume and Hovell Track and natural bushland setting are also considered by the respondents to be the most valued.

Which areas of Eastern Hill people think need improvement?

- ▶ Nearly 75% of the respondents believes that the trails need improvement.
- ▶ Amenities, access roads, car park and the lookout are also seen as areas that need improvement by many respondents.



“Would be awesome to see the trails built up and improved.”



“As a child I lived on Walsh Street in East Albury (my parents still do). We made trails up on Eastern Hill, which we spent hours making and riding. To see legal, professionally constructed trails on Eastern Hill, would be a child hood dream come true. The area is a blank canvas just waiting to have the most made of it.”

“Having spent a lot of time here I can say that a viewing platform out the back of the carpark overlooking Wodonga would be very nice for sunset views.”

Difficulties encountered to accessing Eastern Hill?

Top responses to this open-ended question included:

- ▶ Overgrown plants on walking trail (especially during summer)
- ▶ Poor trail quality - unclear, uneven, erosion, lack clear signage
- ▶ Lack way-finding signage
- ▶ Limited parking
- ▶ Dangerous East Street crossing

Other responses included:

- ▶ Paths lack connectivity
- ▶ Poor accessibility for mobility and restricted users
- ▶ Restrict access at Mungabareena Reserve during flood
- ▶ Lack of formal mountain bike trails

"Walking trail in poor condition."

"You have to climb over a stile. There is also a lot of barbed wire fencing that poses a potential hazard."

"The stairs up the hill from Gunbower Close are in poor condition. Pedestrian access from East street is only on the roadside - not safe for walkers."

"The road is extremely narrow and it makes it dangerous for both cars and pedestrians. It could also do with better toilet facilities for children."

"I sometimes feel a bit vulnerable along East St."

"Long grass covering trails, making trail difficult to see and increased snake danger."

"The road is extremely narrow and it makes it dangerous for both cars and pedestrians. It could also do with better toilet facilities for children."



Would people like to see Mountain Bike (MTB) trails on Eastern Hill?

- ▶ Responses to this were mixed. Some respondents showed strong support for MTB trail development on Eastern Hill, while others were concerned that it will have a negative impact on the peaceful natural environment, as well as increase risks for walkers and runners at eastern hill.
- ▶ Data shows that, for those who would like to see MTB trails to be developed on Eastern Hill, flow trails are the most popular trail type followed by cross country trails and jump trails.



“The beauty of Eastern Hill is that there is room for Mountain Biking developments along with walking and trail running to co-exist with planning on access and dedicated trails and trail head development that will allow all users to enjoy the hill without conflict.”

“What a great idea to better develop Eastern hill. As a family we would use a facility like this a lot more especially on mountain bike. Building easy mtb tracks for younger children would be ideal given the large volume of young families that live in eastern view estate particularly and there is nothing else like this in the area.”



Other features that could be developed on Eastern Hill?

- ▶ Development of viewing platforms was the most popular choice amongst the respondents.
- ▶ Over half of the respondents also believes that revegetation - tree planting should be undertaken at Eastern Hill.
- ▶ Nearly 50% of the respondents would also like to see the upgrade of walking tracks to improve access for people with mobility barrier.
- ▶ A quarter of the respondents expressed their support to the introduction of interpretative signage.

“A great asset to Albury but could attract great tourism and more users if signage and trail connecting was improved”

Other suggestions on Eastern Hill?

Top responses to this open-ended question included:

- ▶ Need additional trail link/access points
- ▶ Need for adequate toilet facilities
- ▶ Need more bins and regular rubbish collection
- ▶ Improve safety at look out
- ▶ Provide shaded parking
- ▶ Lack of lighting on East Street
- ▶ Lack clear directional signage
- ▶ Review fencing
- ▶ Need clear separation between walking and bike trails
- ▶ More patrol and surveillance
- ▶ Enhance connection with Mungabareena Reserve and Doctor's Point wetland to encourage walking, interpretation and education

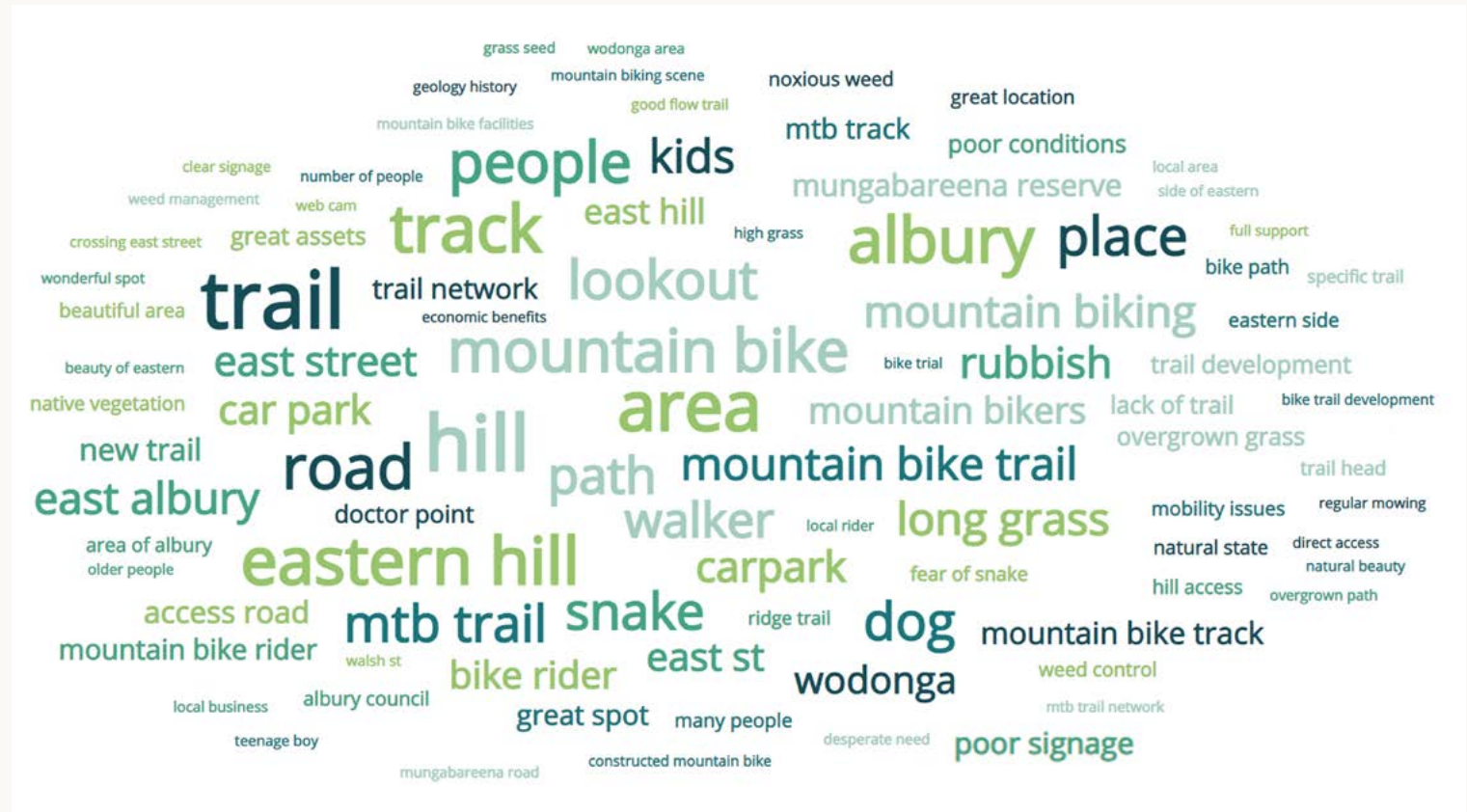


Image: Word cloud - Top online survey responses

Stakeholder Workshops



The workshops were held on the 23 March 2022 at AlburyCity Council offices. Albury City Council managed the identification, invitation, and attendance of the stakeholder groups.

Representatives from the following user groups were invited to attend the workshops:

- ▶ Internal stakeholders from Albury City Council, including two representatives from Council's traffic team and one representative from Council's water team. A video meeting with Council's environment team was held on 29 March 2022.
- ▶ Albury Wodonga Mountain Bikers.
- ▶ Rotary Club of Albury.

Albury City Council Traffic Team

General comments

Council receives a large number of complaints about traffic and pedestrian conflicts on the lookout access road and the speed of cars traveling along East Street. The entry to the access road is on an angle which also creates safety issues.

Opportunities

- ▶ Slow vehicular traffic along East Street using visual disturbance (e.g. different coloured line marking) crest to crest, reducing the speed limit to 40km/hr or constructing minor speed humps.
- ▶ Prioritise walking and cycling (narrow East Street and provide refuge island to 3.0 metres wide)
- ▶ Consider re-locating Hume and Hovell Track from Walsh Street.
- ▶ Consider a wildlife crossing (signage).
- ▶ Improve visibility to lookout access road / lookout entry with signage and lighting.
- ▶ Achieve DDA compliance (surface finish, but not necessarily grade) from East Street to car park.
- ▶ Separate pedestrian to vehicle and pedestrian to cycling.
- ▶ Include new solar street lighting and CCTV for access road and car park.
- ▶ Investigate a separate exit further south pending review of existing remnant vegetation.
- ▶ Formalise car park and potentially provide a smaller, and more efficient solution.
- ▶ Pedestrian usage has not been measured, however vehicle numbers for East Street are available. Traffic team to undertake counts of pedestrian numbers for East Street
- to be undertaken and utilised in this project.
- ▶ Include a DDA compliant path from car park to Trig Point
- ▶ Consider a second car park added elsewhere, such as indented or angled parking on East Street.
- ▶ Provide traffic sketch options and Traffic will carry out technical work for viability at Interim Draft Master Plan phase.
- ▶ Review potential pedestrian connections shown on plans for Sunrise Terrace.



Albury City Council Water Team



General comments

The two larger water tanks (potable) are on-line. The others shall be decommissioned after a tank assessment which will be carried out by ACC over the next few months. It was agreed that the tanks on Eastern Hill should be prioritised.

Maintenance trails must be able to be accessed by a utility vehicle for weekly inspections to access the tanks. Rutting of trails can be an issue.

The possibility of tank art (murals) was discussed. It was noted that minimal public access is recommended as it may affect water quality.

Opportunities

- ▶ Awaiting result of tank assessment. If tanks are to be decommissioned, re-vegetation to take place in those positions.
- ▶ Maintenance trail to remain for weekly inspections by a utility vehicle.
- ▶ Improve the rilling and rutting of maintenance trails.

Albury City Council Environment Team

General comments

Eastern Hill is zoned C2, and along with Nail Can Hill, has the highest environmental values in Albury City Council. The parcel of reserve west of East Street behind the hospital and Devil's Glen have the most intact vegetation and highest biodiversity values.

Opportunities

- ▶ Create better wildlife corridors between areas of the vegetation and to the river.
- ▶ Emphasise conservation and restoration of ecological systems, including Grassy Box-Gum Woodland and Box-Gum Open Forest, and habitat of threatened species such as woodland birds and squirrel gliders.
- ▶ Protect and retain large old trees as these provide hollows and are an important nectar source.
- ▶ Incorporate interpretive signage throughout the reserve.
- ▶ Improve the existing trail at Devil's Glen, as a local (secondary) link to Eastern Hill.
- ▶ A separate exit further south on East Street (closer to Heath Street) will require cultural heritage and flora and fauna impact assessments.
- ▶ Install wildlife signs for a fauna crossing between Walsh and Heath Streets.
- ▶ Identify squirrel glider numbers in the reserve and investigate whether poles are required across East Street.
- ▶ People visit Eastern Hill for solitude and nature observation - ensure there is separation between tracks and activity areas.
- ▶ Engage new groups such as citizen science and Landcare.
- ▶ Ensure any improvement to trails is sensitive and minimise disturbance.
- ▶ Provide vegetation buffer zones and transitions between C4 environmental living (Doctors Point) and the reserve.
- ▶ Acquisition of the southern portion of Eastern Hill would provide an environmental corridor connecting the river. This benefit would need to be considered against ongoing maintenance requirements.
- ▶ ACC Environment team to provide environmental mapping data to support master plan development.
- ▶ Find balance between conservation, passive recreation, active recreation, and nature observation.
- ▶ Address the potential development of a Eastern Hill Restoration Plan.
- ▶ Maintenance to existing fire trails.
- ▶ The Grassy Box Gum Woodlands and Open Forest Vegetation Communities found on Eastern Hill most likely fall under a Threatened Ecological Communities listed under Federal or State legislation.



Rotary Club of Albury



Images from Rotary Club's submissions:
examples of memorial structure, lookout and
interpretive signage

General comments

Members from the Rotary Club presented a document which has some 'essentials' for the site as well as an aspirational wish list. It was noted that Eastern Hill lookout was developed by Rotary in 1978 as a 50 year commemoration project, and as such it has special significance.

Opportunities

- ▶ Aspirational ideas included model railway and cable car.
- ▶ Enlarge and formalise the car park with islands of tree planting and line marking.
- ▶ Provide a covered BBQ, non-destructive seats (concrete perhaps and a drinking fountain.)
- ▶ Incorporate interpretive signage, including maps and local information.
- ▶ Include an elevated viewing deck with a second deck at Trig Point.
- ▶ Investigate under-grounding of power.
- ▶ It was suggested that the name Eastern Hill Rotary Lookout be retained.
- ▶ Investigate a roundabout with possible land acquisition and new access road to lookout at the intersection of East and Walsh Streets.
- ▶ Consider widening the access road from one lane to two.
- ▶ Investigate street lighting and CCTV to improve security.

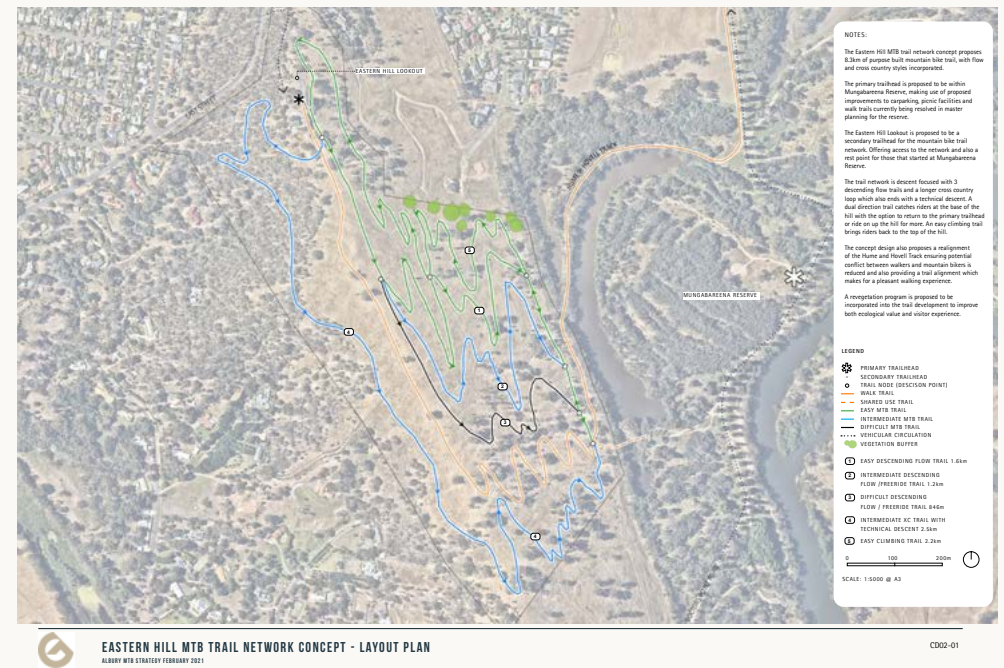
Albury Wodonga Mountain Bikers

General comments

The Albury Wodonga Mountain Bikers were happy with the proposed trail network proposed in the Mountain Bike Strategy which included one ascending trail, three descending flow trails and one cross-country trail.

Opportunities

- ▶ Include bike racks, shelter, seating, drinking fountain at both trail heads, as well as trail signage.
- ▶ Widen foot bridge at Mungabareena Reserve
- ▶ Opportunity to investigate a shared path through Mungabareena Reserve with a beginner trail.
- ▶ Consider a jumping area.
- ▶ Ensure that when joining a trail into another, they are going the same way especially when coming down hills.
- ▶ Incorporate a trail choke at end or near crossing points to slow riders down.
- ▶ Incorporate way finding signage.
- ▶ Ensure that switch backs are not too close or riders will cut across.
- ▶ Consider a tunnel or other grade separation structure across East Street'
- ▶ Investigate a separate in-out access road to the car park to alleviate traffic pressure as parents are likely to shuttle tweens (10-15yo) from bottom of trail to existing car park
- ▶ The lookout car park to allow for 15 cars, with a secondary trail head car park at the bottom of the MTB trail network at Mungabareena Reserve.



Trail Network Concept prepared by Common Ground 2021

Aboriginal consultation



Engagement summary

Yonder met with four Mungabareena Declared Aboriginal Place Elders to discuss the Master Plan and specifically, connections with Mungabareena Reserve.

Yonder met with Liz Heta and Aunty Diann Tremain at 10am, Tuesday 3 May 2022 at Yonder's Albury office. Yalmambirra was unavailable that day; Yonder met him separately at 11am, Thursday 5 May 2022 at Retro Cafe in Albury. Darren Wighton was not able to be contacted.

General comments

- ▶ Mungabareena is a significant site, and was used for the annual ceremony prior to the journey to Mount Bogong. Artifacts have been found there. A permanent camp was located at the site of waterworks.
- ▶ The southern end of Eastern Hill ridge (where the seat is located) would have been a significant place for Aboriginal people to look out towards Kiewa and the distant mountains.
- ▶ Mungabareena would have included the floodplain and Eastern Hill. The floodplain was for women's business, and Eastern Hill would have been the men's space. Eastern Hill provided a place to survey the landscape, and during flood the people would have re-located to Eastern Hill.

Issues and opportunities

- ▶ There was concern that a mountain bike trail head and car park at Mungabareena will encourage more people into the space, creating the potential for more vandalism/damage. It was suggested that a new car park be located adjacent to Doctors Point Road and as close to the Eastern Hill entry point as possible. Signage should be low key and the car park itself minimal.
- ▶ Heavy duty, vandal resistant vehicle barriers (not bollards) should be installed to protect the reserve - it was suggested boulders and planting to restrict vehicles rather than bollards.
- ▶ It was suggested that the landscape features (rivers etc) have Aboriginal names on interpretive signage. Need to refer to old journals for place names, including Eastern Hill as it may have an Aboriginal name.
- ▶ Any revegetation should utilise local provenance seed stock. A cultural burn could be undertaken prior to revegetation works to eradicate weeds and after a re-vegetation plan has been prepared.
- ▶ Consider blurring the boundary between Eastern Hill and Mungabareena Reserve - traditionally Mungabareena would have included the floodplain and Eastern Hill.



Image of contemporary painted rock from Mungabareena Aboriginal Place Management Plan. Prepared on 12 September 2019 for AlburyCity by Biosis Pty Ltd.

Next Steps: Opportunities for consideration in the Draft Master Plan

Generally

- ▶ Improve maintenance across the whole reserve.
- ▶ Investigate walking trail network and amalgamate, rationalise and extend as required.
- ▶ Retain, protect and restore existing environmental values.
- ▶ Implement a way-finding signage hierarchy across the reserve.
- ▶ Remove all barbed wire from fences.
- ▶ Protect and retain large old trees for habitat values and amenity.

1 Water Tank Precinct

- ▶ Improve maintenance track/fire trail/walking track and investigate drainage control measures.
- ▶ Consider tank art trails
- ▶ Improve entry experience from Keene Street, Walsh Street, East Street and Mount Street.
- ▶ Consider development of key locations for resting, viewing and interpretive signage.

2 Heath Street Precinct

- ▶ Improve walking track and investigate drainage control measures.

3 The Ridge Precinct











- ▶ Improve access along connection from Gunbower Close to the Ridge walking track (Hume and Hovell Track).
- ▶ Investigate and improve vehicular and pedestrian connections by the possible use of visual interruption, refuges, roundabout, additional paths. Reduction in speed limit, separated entry and egress roads.
- ▶ Investigate the viability of a lookout at the arrival point.
- ▶ Improve the arrival experience by rationalising the car park arrangement and better facilities. Including toilet, furniture, BBQ, shelters, lookout and signage.
- ▶ Develop an accessible connection between the arrival point and Trig Point.

- ▶ Develop a key lookout destination at the Trig Point, potentially including seating, raised platform and interpretive signage.
- ▶ Consider CCTV, solar lighting and installing electricity lines underground.
- ▶ Remove rural fencing within reserve boundaries.
- ▶ Investigate possible connections from Sunrise Terrace.
- ▶ Incorporate grade separation and safe intersections for pedestrian movement routes and MTB trails.
- ▶ Undertake revegetation and stabilisation measures throughout the MTB trail network.
- ▶ Provide wildlife corridors to the river through ecological restoration.
- ▶ Improve the alignment and condition of the Hume and Hovell Track.

4 Devils Glen

- ▶ Improve walking track and investigate drainage control measures.
- ▶ Investigate connection from Devils Glen to Doctors Point Road.

Legend

-  Extent of work
-  Vehicular access
-  Walking tracks
-  Hume and Hovell Track
-  Footpath
-  Views
-  Key locations for development
-  Improve entry experience
-  Possible pedestrian entry
-  Extent of review for safe pedestrian connection

